

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 290

SP 034 070

AUTHOR Finch, Mary Ellen; Rasch, Kathe
TITLE Preparing Preservice Students for Diverse Populations.
PUB DATE Jun 92
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the National Forum of the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education (5th, Louisville, KY, June 5-8, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cultural Differences; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Holistic Approach; Multicultural Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Public Education; Social Influences; *Student Characteristics; *Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS *Maryville University of Saint Louis MO; *Preservice Teachers; Reflective Teaching

ABSTRACT

The Education Division of Maryville University (Missouri) believes in preparing teachers for student diversity. It encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners and suggests that the quality of a teacher's reflections and actions depends on a developmental ability to integrate concrete teaching experiences, models and strategies of others, and principles of research in teaching into an integrated whole. Maryville's teacher education program has four conceptual strands: (developmental, curriculum and instruction, sociological, and research). The paper describes the Roblee Project, which builds upon the experiences and curriculum permeating Maryville's preservice teacher education program. The project began in 1991 with several activities: faculty and focus group meetings on cultural diversity designed to critique preservice teacher education; data collection from new students, student teachers, and first-year teachers; and resource list collection. Data analysis showed that: (1) students were uncomfortable with children unlike themselves; (2) racism existed in most students; (3) students needed to believe that all children could learn; (4) many students did not want to work in schools with diverse populations; and (5) most students were ignorant of the civil rights movement and related historical issues. One crucial finding is that providing dissonance in terms of both knowledge and experience is crucial. (SM)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED351290

SP

PREPARING PRESERVICE STUDENTS
FOR
DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Paper Presented at the
AILACTE Forum
Louisville, Kentucky
June 6-8, 1992

Mary Ellen Finch
Kathe Rasch

Maryville University-St. Louis

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. F. Warren

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP034070

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education programs, more often than not, have failed to address the learning needs of children attending public schools today. According to John Goodlad in his recently published critical analysis of teachers and teacher education:

Belief in the incapability of many children and youth to learn abounds. Horrifyingly large numbers of teachers share this belief; indeed, they use it to excuse their own failures. Teachers must come out of a preparation program with the belief that they can and will teach all their pupils to the best of their ability and that they will share in both their successes and failures.

(TEACHERS FOR OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS, P. 60)

While recent research studies signal a growing population in the nation's schools composed of a majority of minority children, teacher education programs continue to be populated largely by students who are Anglo-Saxon females from rural, suburban and/or small towns.

Rather than take teacher education students, most of whom have had limited experience working with minorities or a culturally diverse population, and expose and even encourage these prospective teachers to become knowledgeable about and eager to work in urban areas, Goodlad found, "with a few exceptions, the programs in our sample were oriented to suburban or relatively mildly urban school settings, where most participants did their student teaching."

Teacher education programs within the St. Louis Metropolitan area are not unlike those studied by Goodlad in TEACHERS FOR OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS. Indeed, most teacher education programs in the St. Louis area continue to place a majority of students in the suburbs for student teaching and other practicum placements even though the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Standards for the preparation of teachers mandates some experience or understanding of diverse populations. Because the St. Louis City Schools and the school districts of St. Louis County are involved in a voluntary interdistrict desegregation plan, it is easy for all institutions of higher education to rationalize that every teacher education student, whether working with the public schools of St. Louis City or the public schools in suburban districts of St. Louis County will, at one time or another, encounter racially diverse students. In this respect, Goodlad's findings are highly accurate.

Thus, in most cases, a continuing cycle of teachers who are ill-equipped both in knowledge and skills in working with diverse populations is being prepared by our higher education institutions and, ultimately, employed to teach these children. Once in a school setting, these teachers find themselves ill-prepared to work effectively with the clientele and need to be retrained to work with culturally diverse students, thus escalating teacher training costs with minimal results. This cycle must be broken.

THE MARYVILLE UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Maryville University is located some 12 miles straight west of the Mississippi River on U.S. Highway #64/40. In this regard, it is also some 12 miles due west of the heart of St. Louis. As such, it is also the farthest away from the urban public schools of all the higher education institutions located in St. Louis and St. Louis County. The student body of the University is approximately 6% minority with the majority of people of color enrolled in the graduate teacher education programs. However, the students in the preservice teacher education program at Maryville are, with the exception of one or two, Caucasian and largely female.*

On the other hand, the faculty of the Education Division of Maryville University have a deeply held belief in the preparation of teachers for ALL children. It is this deeply held belief and commitment which lead to the project described in this paper.

The Program Model

The conceptual model guiding the teacher education programs at Maryville University is that of "the teacher as a reflective practitioner" (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983; Grimmett, 1988; Zelchner, 1981; Van Manen, 1977). Faculty members are committed to preparing teachers who, in Schon's words, "reflect IN action as well as reflect ON action." Further, the faculty believe that teachers must be makers of their own meaning, not people who mindlessly teach children or young adults without consciously reflecting intellectually and ethically upon their own beliefs and practices.

The teacher education programs at Maryville are further informed by a constructivist perspective (Kamil, 1985; Duckworth, 1988). By this we mean that the quality of one's reflections and subsequent actions is based upon a developmental ability to integrate one's concrete teaching experiences, the models and strategies of others, and the principles of research in teaching into an integrated whole which makes a personal statement about one's own beliefs and behaviors. (BECOMING A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, p. 3)

* The faculty of the Education Division are highly committed to recruiting minority students into the program. To that end a grant from the Monsanto Fund has provided funding for minority teacher education students committed to teaching science, mathematics or early childhood age children. These funds have helped in recruitment.

Completing the Model: Four Curriculum Strands

Four conceptual strands flow through all parts of the teacher education program at Maryville, giving structure to the reflective practitioner model: a developmental strand, a curriculum and instruction strand, a school and society or sociological strand, and, finally a research strand. These four strands provide the framework for the curriculum of all programs and form the basis for the knowledge base which informs the programs of the Division. The developmental strand, for example, focuses upon both the development of the teacher-to-be as well as upon understanding the developmental instruction strand focuses upon the content to be taught AND the methodology one uses to teach it. The school and society strand enables the teacher-to-be to understand and productively engage in the setting in which she/he is teaching. The research strand provides information on the teaching/learning process and also encourages the teacher-to-be to reflect upon and inquire into his/her own practice.

Programmatic Assumptions

The program model briefly described above is grounded in a set of assumptions adopted by the faculty of the Division after much soul searching, debate and hard programmatic decision making. These assumptions came from who we are as faculty members and constitute our beliefs, our values and, yes, our compromises. According to the Forward in our "Becoming a Reflective Practitioner" document:

Children of all ages, ethnic groups, nationalities and from many cities and states have touched us, affecting these programs. We remember and cherish those who have influenced us in honing our views and developing our beliefs. They have impacted us far more than they will ever know.

Yet these programs are distinctly ours....they are grounded in the following set of assumptions...

- 1) We believe in and actively support the dynamic role of education in our democratic society. Thus, we strive to prepare teachers who see it as their role to engaged youth in the beliefs, values and actions consistent with a political democracy.
- 2) We believe that all children can learn, although they may do so at different rates and in different modes. We further believe that children must be offered access to equitable educational opportunities. Thus, we strive to prepare teachers who believe in and act upon these beliefs as a moral imperative.

- 3) We believe that a teacher in our democratic society must be intellectually able and deeply committed to ongoing learning in and beyond that which relates to the professional requirements of their position(s).
- 4) We believe that teachers must be broadly and deeply prepared in the knowledge and skills of the education profession....and be willing and able to reflect upon their practice and the context in which they practice in order to thoughtfully and ethically consider themselves teachers in our society.

The assumptions above were adopted over three years ago. However, a two-day retreat held by the faculty in May of this year, a new Mission statement was adopted which committed the Education Division:

to offer exemplary teacher education programs which mold and foster the ongoing development of collaborative reflective practitioners who are willing and capable of working with ALL children now and in the future.

Thus, the faculty has committed itself to the preparation of teachers who believe all children can learn and who have the skills to act upon this belief. Understanding these children and the cultures which they bring with them is a part of this belief.

PREPARING TEACHERS FOR A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SOCIETY: THE CURRICULUM TO DATE

The Roblee Project, which is the focus of this presentation, builds upon and extends the experiences and curriculum which already permeates the preservice teacher education program at Maryville University. In order to understand the purposes of the project, a brief sketch of the present curriculum and experiences is provided.

The preservice teacher education program at Maryville engages students in a wide array of clinical experiences which are developmental in nature and designed to meet a variety of purposes.

A very early experience, in the second semester of the freshman year, is offered for students who are just beginning to think about becoming a teacher and serves as the catalyst to move the student either into becoming a prospective teacher or into another career. It is designed to move the student to recognizing that she/he doesn't really know what teaching is, what it entails, or how to "do it". It is the experience, according to Fuller (1969; 1970), which creates a

sense of disquiet and unease and which sets the stage for the next series of steps. And it is an experience where students visit a large number of highly diverse schools and where many of our students encounter their first experience with children who are culturally, racially and ethnically different from themselves. And, based on our program model, it is the experience where, with a warm and caring, yet analytical faculty member, the student begins the process of reflecting upon what teaching is, the many options open for becoming a teacher and helps the student make an early assessment of whether this is the career she/he want to pursue.

While the student body within the Education Division at Maryville is composed of Approximately 50% traditional age undergraduate students and 50% non-traditional age undergraduate/post baccalaureate students, for the purposes of this paper we will focus upon the traditional or non-traditional undergraduate student, not the Post A.B. student.

Students entering the teacher education program at Maryville spend the first year of their program together---that is, the same course work is taken by students whether they are enrolled in our early childhood, elementary, middle level or secondary program. This programming is quite intentional as we believe strongly teachers should understand and be able to act upon the understanding of children as they grow and develop from their earliest years to their high school years. We believe teachers of all ages of children need to understand each other and share in discussion of the various age groups. Too soon, once they are in the schools, they become isolated from each other and forget, if they ever knew, the problems and concerns experienced at each level.

We are trying, at this early part of the program. to begin the process of building collegiality across grades and subject areas. Thus, all our students are engaged in the course work which is described next.

Year Two: Term I	Education 200	Field Work	4 credits
	Developmental Psychology I		3 credits
	School and Society		3 credits

Students who determine they do wish to pursue teacher education as their course of study at Maryville enroll in the first of the "education blocks" within the Education Division. The work engages them five days a week from 8:00 in the morning until noon. The Field Work Practicum places them in schools three mornings a week from 8:00 until noon. A seminar which is part of the practicum and the two academic courses are offered on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. This academic work in developmental psychology and school and society is informed by the field work the students are

experiencing; the faculty meet and plan together so that the students are experiencing, as much as possible, a unified whole.

Getting Started

During the first weeks of the fall term block, students meet with the faculty team in work which is heavily focused upon getting to know one another, examining one's purposes for pursuing teaching as a career, examining the program model at Maryville and how it develops professional expectations and setting professional expectations for field work. At this time, also, students are asked to write an essay which is designed to diagnose their writing ability. The essay, a reaction to an excerpt from the book *WHITE TEACHER* by Paley is designed to force the students to begin thinking about their own views regarding racial and religious issues as they experienced them while growing up.

Various inventories are also administered during these early weeks. These inventories include: the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory and the Preservice Teacher Perceiver Interview developed by Selection Research Inc. The inventories are used as a tool to help the student identify the links between the differences they have as learners and the various learning needs they will find in the children they will encounter as they begin working in classrooms. Thus, all experiences our students engage in are used, developmentally, in two ways---to help them understand themselves as they are growing and developing into teachers AND to help them understand the differences and needs of the students with whom they will be working. Students are also administered a questionnaire developed to assess attitudes toward multicultural education.

Practicum placements, in this first professional sequence engage the students in schools very much like those Goodlad decries---mildly urban settings. These schools range from a population 100% African-American to 45% multicultural (African-American and international). No school has a student body less than 30% culturally diverse. These experiences are, for a large portion of our students, the first they have had with children different from themselves.

As might be assumed, the journaling required as part of the practicum typically focuses upon the flood of impressions about schools, teachers, and children that reflects the beginning teacher education student's growing apprehension about the complexities of schools, children's needs and the role of teachers. But the journals also clearly reflect feelings about students who are culturally and/or racially different from themselves. Prodded by questions written in response to their journaling, students gradually learn it is

okay to write their feelings, their concerns and their questions about how to work with students and, yes, colleagues, who are of different races, cultures, religions.

At the same time, in the concurrent School and Society course, the students are immersed in readings and discussion which focus upon the American school and its role within the American Society. The film series "Eyes on the Prize" is shown and discussed and has consistently provided shock, disbelief and outrage at this period in American history. The response of our students also provides us with data to substantiate how poorly civil rights issues are addressed at the precollegiate level in both public and private schools.

Additional portions of the School and Society course involve required reading in multicultural issues, discussions of gender differences (including analyses of video tapes for gender bias in teaching) and classroom visits from professionals representing various racial and cultural backgrounds talking with the students about....."growing up Hispanic", "Black" etc. in the St. Louis area.

Currently, in the first developmental course, students are relating their observations from their practicum sites and their work in School and Society to different developmental issues. As might be imagined, there is much discussion on the impact and implications of race, gender and ethnicity.

Toward the end of the first term, we begin to focus rather heavily upon issues related to St. Louis Black History, engaging students in discussions of their own ethnic identity and recently we have used a Prime-Time Live program set in St. Louis which focused upon the differences in treatment between an African-American and a white male in the St. Louis community.

A final experience which unites the three courses is a project which asks the groups to explore, in groups, an issue of social justice related students to school children. We anticipate that any issue selected will relate to some aspect of diversity and we have not been disappointed. A paper and group presentation are required. To date, we have found the papers were more superficial than the group presentations which were, indeed, in depth and exciting.

A synthesis paper completes the first term. The requirement is to think through all the experiences and learnings and indicate where growth has taken place. Personal and professional goal setting for the second term is based upon this paper.

Year Two: Term II	Developmental Psychology II	3 credits
	Learning Processes	3 credits
	Learning Processes Practicum	2 credits

Term two continues the work of the first semester. Practicum placements, again, reflect mildly urban populations with the exception of our early childhood students who are placed in our professional development/magnet school in the St. Louis Public Schools. However, it must be admitted that because the school is a MAGNET, the population is mandated to be approximately 50% Black and 50% white. Further, to encourage suburban parents to bring their children to the schools, it is located in an area backed up against St. Louis County. It is NOT in the heart of the urban area!

Teaching and learning styles are focused upon during this term with readings ranging from Janice Hale-Benson's BLACK CHILDREN'S LEARNING STYLES (which, by the way, remains highly controversial within the St. Louis Black community) to the work of Kolb and Gardner. The thrust is meeting the needs of ALL children. Journaling continues as the students work more intensively with children and begin writing lesson plans for teaching purposes. The second developmental psychology course provides time for projects related to our students' interests and many elect to focus upon developmental issues related to culture, race and ethnicity. And, again, as the semester concludes, a synthesis/reflection paper is required.

The Junior and Senior Years

During the junior year, students begin to work intensively in their own programmatic areas. Thus, early childhood and elementary education students go their way and middle and secondary students theirs. Students come together during their final student teaching term in a professional seminar where issues of diversity, again, are discussed among them and their experiences in student teaching are focused upon. In their specialized courses, however, in the junior year, we have found that the work begun rather intensively during the first two blocks is erratic. Certain courses (Children's Literature/Language Arts, Language Development, several methods courses) deal more directly and thoroughly with issues of diversity than others. Indeed, a survey of the faculty and all the preservice courses taught indicate that we ALL include these issues but to a varying degree. And, we must admit, the remainder of our field experiences, including student teaching, thrust the students, again, in schools where are either mildly urban or outright suburban, albeit at least 25% minority. Our selections are made on the curricular thrust of the school, whether or not it models our curricular stances AND the quality of the teachers within the school. We debate long and hard whether or not to select more culturally diverse schools for that reason alone. We have elected at this time to work within schools which can provide experiences and models which are congruent with how we want our students to teach---no matter where they are. Far too often these experiences are within suburban schools.

THE ROBLEE PROJECT

As indicated above, issues of diversity and of working with all children have consciously been part of our teacher education curriculum. However, as we examined our programs more intensively, both from the feedback from our students one and three years after graduation and the feedback we were obtaining from those currently enrolled, we recognized that while we had made a good start (and our students have indicated they are growing, changing, anguishing and our graduates have told us they appreciated what we were doing but that we should be doing MORE), we needed to think through our beliefs about what we were doing more systematically.

Thus, when the opportunity arose to work collaboratively with the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council of the St. Louis Metropolitan Area to submit a proposal for funding for:

planning the design and initial
implementation phase of model
curriculum and training program for
preservice teachers who are preparing
to work with diverse populations,
including children in urban settings....
(Proposal, p. 2)

we literally leaped at the opportunity.

According to the proposal, the intended outcome of the curriculum which will ultimately be developed is "to graduate beginning teachers who are knowledgeable about the needs of diverse groups of children and who have strategies and techniques to use with these youngsters" (p. 2).

We are focusing upon a variety of important issues crucial to teaching diverse cultures. These include the following:

- 1) Attitudes/prejudices/beliefs regarding those "different from us"
- 2) Developing a knowledge base that includes the following:
 - a) Cultural styles and beliefs
 - b) Methods and strategies for working with culturally diverse populations
 - c) Recent research on learning styles and on teaching methods
 - d) Strategies for working with at-risk children
 - e) The politics of teaching in urban settings
 - f) The importance of integrating social services into the school setting
- 3) Developmentally appropriate field/clinical experiences which permit teacher education students to experience working with children in a variety of diverse settings

so that potential teachers may explore their own feelings/ beliefs as well as develop and apply teaching strategies with the students

- 4) Developing a pool of teaching resources (print, visual, people) to enhance the curriculum

and infusing these throughout the entire preservice teacher education program at Maryville.

The Project: Beginnings

The project began in September of 1991 with several activities. Two faculty meetings focused upon cultural diversity/multiculturalism. The first, attended by the assessor we have employed to work with us throughout the project, focused upon faculty beliefs pertaining to cultural diversity and multiculturalism. The second meeting, held several months later, focused upon, course by course and faculty member by faculty member, what we were doing within our courses/clinical experiences to involve students in these areas.

The first faculty meeting began slowly and, as one might imagine, rapidly heated up as we explored our beliefs and values. We were eventually able to come to agreement about what we wanted our students to know and be able to do, but it became quite clear that we, as faculty members, are at very different stages in our own beliefs about the issue of multiculturalism. In addition, we have some very different opinions about what should be in the teacher education curriculum to engage our students in this issue. One faculty member, of example, believed (and still believes) that we should require a specific course in human relations which will help students explore their own beliefs and values and then begin to learn skills for operating both in society and in the classroom. Other faculty members strongly pushed for the "infusion" approach. By that they mean that this exploration and content should infuse the total curriculum and draw upon the experiences the students are having in the schools. At least for the moment, the "infusion" approach won.

It was clear from our discussion that the faculty believes so strongly in the developmental nature of becoming a teacher that the entire issue of "knowing and being able to do" related to multiculturalism must also be approached from the developmental context. Our students come to us with a myriad of views and experiences. Some have gone to school with diverse populations, have worked with people from many different cultures and are comfortable with people of many different races, religions and ethnic groups. Others have grown up in rural areas without seeing an African-American or have attended highly elite private schools and come from a protected background. We recognize that we must work

differently with each. This is clearly a challenge. In addition to the faculty confronting the issues, both in our beliefs and in our course work, we organized a focus group representative of the St. Louis metropolitan area. We took into consideration the following demographics: urban/suburban, minority/majority, teacher/administrator/higher education and beginning/experienced teachers. This focus group met three times over the past year with the following charge relating to multiculturalism/cultural diversity: brainstorm what a BEGINNING teacher needs to know and be able to do to work effectively with diverse populations, review and critique our preservice teacher education program with this in mind and suggest changes we might incorporate and, finally, suggest resources we might use as we further develop the curriculum.

Concurrently, we began to pay more attention to what we were doing in our classes with our introductory teacher education students. To that end we identified a representative sample of our students and the assessor working with us engaged in the following data collection activities: analyzing pre-post surveys of their beliefs regarding race and other areas of cultural diversity, analyzing their journals and reflection papers regarding these issues and shadowing these students in their field sites to see how they interacted with children of different races and ethnic groups.

We also gathered data from two other sources: our student teachers who had completed our program and experienced what we have been doing in this area over the past four years and our first year teachers. We were especially interested in the latter group because the faculty member responsible for our first-year follow-up had indicated that many of these beginners were having difficulty with their African-American students in areas related to behavior and expectations. Therefore, we brought these people into the university and solicited direct and systematic input from them regarding areas of difficulty and what they thought we might have done to help them avert these problems.

Finally, we have begun to collect, with the wonderful help of our task force members and others, lists and lists of resources, many free or inexpensive, which we can weave throughout our program.

In summary, we have focused, for primary data collection purposes, upon our beginners---those enrolled in the first and second terms of our preservice teacher education programs. For comparison purposes, we also sampled our student teachers and our first year teachers. We obtained data from task force members which has helped us think about our work. And we have employed an assessor to work with us to gather data using a triangulated approach: observations, interviews and analysis of written materials. We anticipate

this data will help us better understand what is happening to our students as they proceed through the teacher education program. The data we have documents year I; we will follow these students throughout their entire program and into their first year of teaching.

Early Data Analysis: Some Preliminary Findings

A. The Assessor's View

According to "Nina":

The students in Professor Rasch's course..... kept journals which gave detailed accounts of what they saw in their field placements and how they felt about them. Of the five students I focused on, two surprised me. One rather quiet student wrote terrific entries in his journal on what he would do differently in the classroom and how he would "make a difference" in the treatment of a racist or sexist subject. Another student who gave no evidence of being unable to relate to non-White children revealed a strongly felt prejudice against Black females which she didn't know quite how to change.....

Three of the journals I read included at least some mention of the different ethnic groups they saw in the classroom. When this was done the Maryville student was usually critical of some remark a teacher made to or about a non-White pupil. One journal revealed an ignorance about the Jewish yamulke and its significance to a Jew. This same student rejected a Black student's attempts for sympathy when encountering a difficult lesson. The constructive comments inserted by the professors.....are helpful and necessary.

The assessor suggested that we might want to consider other activities to build upon the feelings and beliefs being expressed in the journals. And while we do engage the students in ongoing discussion in our classes, she suggested one possibility which can be very personal and yet very revealing to the student. Based on an article from the Spring, 1992 Harvard Educational Review by Berley Daniel Tatum, she suggests we ask the students to conduct a privately taped interview with themselves on their feelings about race, gender, and a multicultural society. They then would listen to their own tape and incorporate this data in their final end of the term reflection paper, indicating how

they have/have not changed and, perhaps setting goals for the next semester. We plan to do this in the fall of 1992.

The assessor also gave us positive information about our placement sites:

The efforts the schools are making to educate their faculty and their students about living in a multicultural environment are encouraging, especially at New City School and Nipher Middle School. In both of these settings I am impressed with the number of opportunities the children had to learn about other cultures, and the achievements of women and non-Christians.....

And, according to Nina:

.....the students themselves made a few suggestions for improving their field experiences.....more practical suggestions for handling a student's feelings in the classroom. he felt he witnesses some racial insensitivity in the classroom homework assignments and some sexism in a film that was shown in one of his classes. One student would have liked to be placed in an inner city magnet school.....

This last request, obviously, ties in with Goodlad's criticism of teacher education programs.....that even if we do use urban or culturally diverse settings, they tend to be "mildly urban". Our assessor cautioned us that if we do use an inner city magnet (our own magnet only goes from age 4 through grade 2), we should be sure they "can be assigned to an excellent Black teacher, that they can shadow and then get to know the teacher on a personal basis".

Nina also indicated that one secondary site, although 25% African-American, probably permitted at least one of our students to be "a little too comfortable and she might have been able to work on some of her prejudices if she had been at a different site". This same student literally rebelled at the prospect of taking an African-American Literature class which was suggested by her advisor. Obviously, we are concerned about this student also.

The assessor also indicated that all the clinical placements were "safe teaching environments". They were warm and caring places although at least two of the schools....."are still working through a lot of what the other schools have already resolved.....coping with the "Deseg" student problem. These sites cause us concern for further placements although this is a reality not only we, but also our students must face.

According to Nina:

The students were more concerned with discipline problems they might face than the racial make-up of the classroom.....most wanted more time than the 9 weeks of 9 hours each.

And, although she indicated she felt the students were bright and able, she also sensed a few had "very deep rooted prejudices against non-White children and the journals helped confirm that suspicion"

And, finally, but not happily:

.....I do believe the students who are having problems with their non-White pupils are having these problems because of preconceived notions as to what these kids will be like.....and a sense of White superiority.

The journals conveyed much.

B. More Is Better

Our experiences this past year tell us that the more knowledge and awareness our students have regarding issues of cultural diversity, the more they grow in attacking their own biases and beliefs. Taking a leaf from the developmental tree, we have found that we need to provide dissonance both in terms of knowledge and experiences in order to help our students work themselves to a higher level. Providing time for them to talk with professionals from a variety of racial and ethnic groups about their concerns helped a great deal. Showing them (and discussing at length) EYES ON THE PRIZE and PRIME TIME LIVE (the segment on racism in ST. Louis) provided opportunities for probing beliefs.

Yet, we also found that while students initiated questions and comments in their journals and reflection papers during the fall term when we were heavily focusing upon cultural diversity, the spring term block didn't produce the same results. Students were, again, placed in schools. However, rather than simply observing and occasionally working with an individual student or small group, they were required to teach a minimum of our lessons. The survival mode appeared to kick in and their journals reflected more of that type of concern rather than concern for the individual student. Unless we posed the question directly (eg. how did your lesson take into account children with diverse needs OR how did your content reflect the interests of children of different races and/or cultures), they tended not to think about the issue or, rather, the students tended not to make

it apparent. When we read Janice Hale-Benson's book on BLACK CHILDREN'S LEARNING STYLES they focused on the issue once again. More is better! More and consistent is probably even "more better".

We have found that placing our students in clinical sites which create dissonance is crucial. Thus, we must continue to use the sites which are heavily diverse yet which are open to our teaching/learning model. Unfortunately, these are difficult to find and when we do find them, we must continually nurture them. But we have found that our students must be confronted consistently with their own prejudices and beliefs or they push them aside or back. This is, obviously, not unlike any of us. We also found that our students who were placed in all-Black schools tended to focus less on race as a primary discriminator of children's behavior than those who were in integrated schools. We need to look more at that.

Next Steps

Clearly, our data from this initial year is limited. However, some generalizations may be made:

- 1) Our students, by and large, are uncomfortable working with children different from them, especially African-American children.
- 2) Our students have had limited experience with people from other races, cultures, ethnic groups.
- 3) Focusing on the belief that all children can learn is crucial for getting our students to think beyond race, gender, ethnicity.....
- 4) Racism is alive and well in all of us and takes continued work to root out. It surfaces in our behaviors when we least expect it to and it surfaces in the journals of our students when they are confronted with issues they cannot explain.
- 5) Many of our students simply do not want to work in schools where they will meet children different from themselves. They acknowledge they would not seek a teaching position in the St. Louis Public Schools nor in many districts which are highly minority.
- 6) Our students, especially our traditional aged students are woefully ignorant of the civil rights movement and other issues in American History which focus on minority concerns AND our students do not appear to understand, from an operational point of view, the meaning of the Constitution of the United States, especially the Bill of Rights.

Many more generalizations may be made. However, in order to move to the next stage, we recognize that while we much continue to work on "awareness" of the issues of cultural diversity, (the stage of what they should KNOW), we must move our students past this stage and into the stage of "being able to do" or to work effectively with children of all races, ethnic and ability groups. This is the hard part. We are groping with finding strategies to do this. One way, we believe, is the development of case studies which our students can grapple with at varying levels and in various content areas. Another is finding inner city (and other) schools where our students can work intensively with diverse children under the guidance of caring teachers who want to also help beginning teachers grow and develop. This is a tall order.

Finally, it helps to know that we are not alone and that our colleagues in teacher education are attempting to address this issue in ways much like we. We need to share our success and our failures for we can all learn from each other. And we must if we are to meet the needs of all our children.

REFERENCES

- Finch, Mary Ellen (1990) BECOMING A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER. Maryville University, St. Louis, Missouri.
- Dewey, John (1933) HOW WE THINK; A RESTATEMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF REFLECTIVE THINKING TO THE EDUCATIVE PROCESS. Chicago, Henry Regnery.
- Duckworth, Eleanor (1987) THE HAVING OF WONDERFUL IDEAS AND OTHER ESSAYS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING. New York, Teachers College Press.
- Goodlad, John (1990) TEACHERS FOR OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Grimmett, P. (1988) The Nature of Reflection and Schon's Conception in Perspective. In P. O. Grimmett and G. L. Erickson (Eds.) REFLECTION IN TEACHER EDUCATION (pp. 5-15). New York, Teachers College Press.
- Kamil, C. (1985) Turning out autonomous teachers in a heteronomous world. Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Association of Early Childhood Educators. New Orleans, November 15, 1985.
- Schon, D.A. (1983) THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER: HOW PROFESSIONALS THINK IN ACTION. New York, Basic Books.
- Schon, D.A. (1987) EDUCATING THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER; TOWARD A NEW DESIGN FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE PROFESSIONS. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Van Manen, M. (1977) Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. Curriculum Inquiry, 6 (3) 205-208.
- Zeichner, K. (1981) Reflective teaching in field-based experience in teacher education. Interchange, 12 (4) 1-22.
- Zeichner, K & Liston, D. (1987) Teaching student teachers to reflect. Harvard Educational Review, 57 (1), 23-48.